

*Very precious*  
THE PRINCIPLES AND  
OBJECTS OF THE  
PARENTS' NATIONAL  
EDUCATIONAL UNION

THIRD EDITION

MRS. CLEMENT PARSONS



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THE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS OF THE  
PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION

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AN ADDRESS

BY

MRS. CLEMENT PARSONS

(AS DELIVERED BEFORE THE DELEGATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONGRESS OF WOMEN, LONDON, 1899)

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To be obtained from the Secretary, P.N.E.U. Office  
26, Victoria Street, S.W.

PRICE 6d.

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THIRD AND REVISED EDITION

LONDON:  
WOMEN'S PRINTING SOCIETY, LIMITED,  
66 & 68, WHITCOMB STREET, W.C.



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# Parents' National Educational Union

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*Presidents : The EARL and COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN*  
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## WHAT IS THE PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION ?

THE Parents' National Educational Union has arisen in response to a demand from thoughtful parents. It has grown out of their desire to study the laws which govern habit and the principles upon which to select ideas that inspire and educate, their desire to know how to deal with hereditary tendencies and how to give intelligent supervision and guidance to the development of their children's whole nature, physical, mental, moral and spiritual.

The rapid accumulation during late years of data bearing upon the interaction of body, mind and moral sense, has made it needful to reconsider many old-established ideas about Education. Parents and teachers are now aware that they must to some extent neutralise each other's work and weaken its results, unless they take counsel together.

The Union aims at giving opportunities for the study of Educational Problems, and a meeting ground for intercourse between parents, teachers, and all who are interested in Education. Special stress is laid on the use of the word Education, in its



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widest sense, not as meaning instruction only, but the development of the whole nature, on the underlying principle that "Character is everything." The two functions of Education (as it is understood by the Union), are the presentation of ideas and the formation of habits. These two, it will be seen, are the chief means at our disposal for the modification of character.

### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS

*The Central Principles*, to which all Local Branches of the Society—(while free to organise themselves)—shall be pledged, are:—1. That a Religious basis of work be maintained. 2. That the series of addresses and other means employed by the Union shall be so arranged as to deal with Education under the following heads: (a) Physical; (b) Mental; (c) Moral; and (d) Spiritual. 3. That arrangements concerning Lectures, etc., be made with a view to the convenience of fathers as well as of mothers. 4. That the work of the Union be arranged to help parents of all classes. *The Objects are:* (a) To assist parents of all classes to understand the best principles and methods of Education, in all its aspects, and especially in those which concern the formation of habits and character. (b) To create a better public opinion on the subject of the training of children, and with this object in view, to collect and make known the best information and experience on the subject. (c) To afford to parents opportunities of co-operation and consultation, so that the wisdom and experience of each may be profitable to all. (d) To stimulate their enthusiasm, through the sympathy of numbers acting together. (e) To secure greater unity and continuity of Education, by harmonising home and school training.

The Union has many Branches. Not parents only, but all who are interested in Education are invited to join. A local Branch may be formed in any district by, or with, the approval of the Executive Committee of the Central Council. Suggestions as to the formation of new Branches may be obtained from the Secretary by any who are interested in the work of the Union.

Local Branches, on their formation, send in the names of their Committee, and an affiliation fee of One Guinea to the Central Council, and pay a yearly capitation fee of 20 per cent. on the income derived from subscriptions for Branches within the London postal district; and 10 per cent. on the income derived from subscriptions for country Branches.

The advantages offered to members paying a subscription of 10/- a year to their Branch are:—1. A monthly copy of the *Parents' Review*. 2. A certain number of free lectures, according to the funds of the Branch. 3. Opportunity for co-operation and consultation between parents and teachers, who meet here on common ground. 4. Opportunity for forming and attending courses of lectures and classes which are arranged by Local Branch Secretaries. 5. The use of the large library of Educational works, which is kept at the Central Office.

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## Parents' National Educational Union

**\*Literature.**—*The Parents' Review*. This Magazine (the organ of the Union) is published monthly, and can be obtained from the Office for 6s. 6d. annually; single copies post free, 7½d. Specimen copies can be had from the Secretary. Various pamphlets are from time to time published and sold by the Union.

*Lending Library.* A large Library of Educational works is kept at the Office, and is free to members. It includes several copies of Miss Mason's *Home Education*, and *Parents and Children*, which members are strongly advised to read.

**\*Free Lectures.**—Training Courses and Classes are arranged by the various Branches. Members of any Branch who wish to attend a Lecture advertised in connection with another Branch should apply for Tickets to the Secretary, P.N.E.U. Office, 26, Victoria Street, S.W.

**\*The Natural History Club.**—The Club was started—

1. To promote the systematic study of Nature.
2. To stimulate and guide amateurs in giving Nature lessons.
3. To encourage the love of Nature in children. These objects are attained—
  - (a) By holding annual Exhibitions of Collections made by members and their children.
  - (b) By arranging a systematic plan of study and instruction, and by recommending suitable text-books.

**\* The Annual Conference usually takes place in May.**

\* For particulars apply to THE SECRETARY, P.N.E.U. Office, 26, Victoria Street, S.W., from whom copies of Prospectus may be obtained.



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*The following are under the superintendence and guidance of Miss Charlotte M. Mason, House of Education, Ambleside.*

**\*The Mother's Education Course** is a course of reading arranged for those who desire to study the subject of Education, and is especially designed—

1. To help Mothers to give their children such teaching as should confirm them in the Christian Religion.
2. To give the knowledge necessary for the care and development of children, in sickness and health.
3. To set forth the principles of Education, and methods based on those principles.
4. To enable Mothers to awaken their children to an interest in Nature.

Entrance fee, One Guinea. Examination fee, 5s. for each examination after the first year.

**\*The Parents' Review School** is a plan devised for introducing some of the advantages of school training into Home Education. Children are classified according to their powers. A time table and syllabus of work is set for each term, and at the end of the term the pupils receive Examination papers. *Fee*—One guinea per annum for a family of one or several children under ten years of age. Two guineas for one child over ten. Three guineas for a family in which there are one or more children over ten.

**\*The House of Education, Ambleside**, is established to train ladies as teachers in families, by instructing them in the art of training, teaching and occupying children and girls from the ages of six to sixteen, on the *methods and principles* advanced by the P.N.E.U. The two years' course embraces Psychology, Ethics, and the Philosophy of Education; Practical Teaching; the teaching of Modern Languages (French, German, and Italian) on the Gouin system; Nature Lore (including Botany and Natural History), Art Modelling in Clay, and Brushwork on broad, artistic lines; Hygiene and Physiology, Arts and Crafts, etc. *Fee*—£23 6s. 8d. a term. Three terms in a year.

\* For particulars apply to MISS CHARLOTTE M. MASON, House of Education, Ambleside.



LADY CAMPBELL, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:—In view of a certain amount of vagueness that may probably exist in the minds of some present respecting the aims and methods of the Parents' National Educational Union, I propose to give most of the short time which our hostess, Mrs. Franklin, has placed at my disposal, to an account—may I be personal, and frankly say—to an account of the reasons for my own faith in this Union as a fresh inspiration, and a most powerful instrument in the great affair of educational advance?

In the very first place I would call your attention to the stress which is mentally laid upon the word "Union" in the title of our Society. It is a *union* of parents, in other words, an association for the consideration of matters affecting the education of children, this consideration to date, in the main, though not entirely, from the side of parents and the home rather than from the side of professed 'educationists' in the school. Primarily, the Parents' Union sets itself to organise in its various local Branches conclaves of mothers and fathers—Parents in Council. Presently, when I attempt to describe the Union's theory of Education, I shall be able to state the philosophical reason for the implied view it herein takes of parents—the view, *viz.*, that all



true and essential Education is rooted where love and charity are rooted, in the home. I believe I do not misrepresent the materialistic, easy-going views of a generation or two ago if I say that then, in many circles, the prevailing educational notion was that parents were to supply the physical needs of children and the school-masters and governesses their mental needs. By whom their moral needs were to be administered to was a vaguer enquiry—and, as a rule, a less imperative one. Against that theory of the triple nature and the triple need of children let us all set our faces very firmly! The Parents' Union has already done so, and, acting in this spirit, it comes forward to lay before parents a few simple, fundamental principles, and to organise and solicit a profitable intercommunication of experience on the detail of the bringing-up of children. "*Profitable intercommunication*," I have said, and even at this early stage I would remark that parents are not looked to to discuss their children's specific faults directly at meetings. I have occasionally heard non-members enquire whether this is our method, so I may as well state explicitly that it is not. Self-reverence surely includes reverence for one's children, reverence which naturally induces in us a reasonable reticence regarding whatever we would fain eradicate from their dispositions. And besides, do we not all know how fatally clearly the foibles of our children are remembered by other people long after we have succeeded in curing those foibles?

I hope no one will have thought that I mentioned *home* and *school* just now as antithetical terms. Antithetical the two should certainly never be, for, though

they are in no sense identical, they are, rightly speaking, parallel. The Parents' Educational Union definitely proposes as one of its objects a better harmonisation of home and school training than has, in many cases, existed hitherto. Hence we prize the opportunity which our Branch Meetings give to parents and teachers to get into touch with one another, to meet on a common yet neutral ground, and take counsel together. The Parents' Union reveres every worthy teacher, and far from any thought of reducing or belittling the teacher's specific functions, its actual aim is to help parents intelligently to prepare the child for the teacher, so that full mutual sympathy may exist between parent and teacher, in order that they may—to use a somewhat low-minded metaphor—play into each other's hands, instead of ignoring, and so half nullifying, each other's work, a state of things unfortunately only too frequent in contemporary life.

I have been told that the Parents' National Educational Union is sometimes described by the frivolous as a society for training up parents in the way they should go. This, I gather, is held to be a sort of indictment—as of a dangerous displacement of the natural order of things. It is, in reality, the highest compliment that could be paid to our Union. Parents though we are, we do not assume the august omniscience of the typical eighteenth century household head, but cordially admit that complete educational wisdom is not communicated to parents, *quâ* parents, by direct revelation of nature. Glad though I should be to linger on this fruitful theme I must pass on to those



ideas of the Parents' Union that directly bear on the education of children.

The educational work of the Union is especially concerned with the formation of habits and character. Sometimes I have almost felt that the word 'Educational' in the name of our Union may tend to mislead some parents we would gladly conciliate, since many people still regard Education as though it exclusively consisted of book-learning and listening to lectures. That the 'P.N.E.U.' view only includes these matters in the sense that the greater includes the less I shall hope by the end of my address to have made clear. The aspect of Education upon which Miss Charlotte Mason, the founder and head of our Union, lays particular stress, is what, in lieu of the generic word 'Education' I can only rather clumsily indicate by such terms as bringing up, moral nurture, the edification of the child, the building of his house of character. To resolve the child's inheritance of mixed dispositions into sound character, into a sterling individuality, is, to Miss Mason and the Parents' Union, the ultimate problem of Education and its supreme end. Faithfully to translate this problem and end into terms of life, and of those little details of day by day which mean pretty nearly everything with a child, is the chief *raison d'être* of the Parents' Union, and the gist of its thought and practice. According to Miss Mason, the alpha and omega of education, thus understood, is habit, habit, habit. She takes with fervent literalness the famous sentence, "Sow an Act, reap a Habit; sow a Habit, reap a Character; sow a Character, reap a Destiny," and applies it to the whole scheme of

Education. It is character alone, says the Parents' Union, that decides a human being's place in this world or in any other. By character alone can a man move his particular circle of the outside world, by character alone can he rule his own spirit. Talent dissevered from character is ineffectual or mischievous, genius without character can but fret its hour. Whether of a nation or an individual, its own character is its supremest achievement.

But what are the steps towards character, and how are we to set about this high enterprise of forming our children's? Miss Mason comes forward with a repetition based upon science of the older evangel based upon faith, "Sow a Habit, reap a Character." An optimist view, some may say (though what fruitful teaching was ever pessimist?), but a view impregnably founded both on common sense and on the deepest spiritual teaching we know.

In Miss Mason's own words, the child brings into the world with him not character, but disposition, and the office of his parent and first educator is to give him control over his own disposition. Now the initial step towards this fulfilment is to lay down lines of habit, that is, to make the right course the line of least resistance. Only parents who have acted out this theory know how, after the first difficulty of starting each little railway of habit is surmounted, their own labours are lightened. *Habit* prevents that running fire of "don't"s and "mind"s which we hear in too many houses, habit makes a highway for good temper, for ready obedience, for promptitude in putting away the toys before bedtime, and so forth. In her inculcation of Habit as



virtually Education, Miss Mason makes a good deal of another modern scientific doctrine, that of Suggestion—not, in our case, hypnotic suggestion, but normal suggestion, the suggestion of the wise and tactful parent to the child, the still more stirring and fruitful occasional suggestion that from time to time will float in upon a child from the outside world—from some powerful personality or some eloquent and piquant incident. Miss Mason recognises the importance of *suggestion* at the earliest link in our chain—Sowing the Act. Let me quote a few sentences from her now almost famous book called *Home Education*:

“It is by force of habit that a tendency becomes a temper, and it rests with the mother to hinder the formation of ill tempers, to force that of good tempers. . . . Remembering that every envious, murmuring, discontented thought leaves a track in the very substance of the child's brain for such thoughts to run in again and again, the mother's care is to hinder at the outset the formation of any such track. She sees into her child's soul—sees the evil temper in the act of rising: now is her opportunity. Let her change the child's thoughts before ever the bad temper has had time to develop into conscious feeling, take him out of doors, send him to fetch or carry, give him something else to think about.”

Elsewhere Miss Mason quotes that saying of à Kempis, “One custom overcometh another,” when she is again counselling mothers to rely upon the power of an inspiring suggestion to combat an inherent disposition in their child towards any faulty habit. A child's mind abhors a vacuum, and the bad line of

thought will only move out at the entrance of a stronger good line of thought. Mental substitution by suggestion is the secret here.

In defining the Parents' Union interpretation of Habit consciously imparted as Education, I would call your attention to another pregnant dictum of modern scientific investigation (it is clearly explained in Dr. Carpenter's work on Mental Physiology), *viz.*, that mental habit does deepen, or alter and modify, the physical nerve-substance of the brain. One can hardly follow this too far in its bearing on Education. To me it appears a grand and most stimulating thought that the parent, the moral educator, can actually shape, not only that intangible entity the child's mind, but his body also, the material tissues of his brain, by means of the discipline of habit. It is, indeed, the rapid accumulation during late years of data bearing upon the interaction of body, mind, and moral sense, that has made it so needful to reconsider many of the old-established ideas about education. Once recognise that education is an art which has its scientific basis in psychology, and the importance of having a rational and verifiable basis, rather than one that is unverifiable, becomes obvious. The Parents' Union theory of education as suggestion and habit is completely in harmony with the known facts of mental physiology—is, indeed, their inevitable resultant.

What I may term the common sense basis of the Parents' Union principle of home education as habit is (here again I quote Miss Mason's words), that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we think as we are accustomed to think, and therefore act as we are accustomed to act.



Hence, in the formation of every successive new habit in children, the stimulus of the new idea must be applied uninterruptedly. It need scarcely be added that during the supplanting of each bad habit by a corresponding good one, a mother's watchfulness must be incessant, but not more incessant than it would be through a case of measles or scarlet fever. We are curiously less willing, as a rule, to give the same pains and watchfulness to children's minds and characters which we give ungrudgingly to their bodies. But the days of casual bringing-up are, we hope and believe, numbered. The theory that the human frame, brain as well as muscle, grows to the uses it is earliest put to is no longer a mere notion—it is a scientific certainty. Instead of dawdling through the whole period of childhood with spasmodic efforts to get a boy to tie his shoe-strings firm, the believer in habit as education takes the matter in hand once for all, keeps incessant watch for the week or two it will take to form the habit, and then the thing is done with for life. The new habit once formed, the educator's task is no more than to look out for chance returns to the old ways till the habit is ingrained in the stuff of the child's character. Everyone will acknowledge that this systematic way of setting to work is a very different thing from the desultory manner in which a child used to be allowed to try off and on for a habit all his days, and never got it. In pondering over Parents' Union principles and methods I have often found a line from Browning's noble play of *Luria* running in my mind—

"All men become good creatures: but so slow!"

The Union's ruling idea of the application of habit

to the education of young children is the most hopeful means I have personally ever met with for helping on individual betterment, and, consequently, race betterment, a little faster, more mechanically, more scientifically, more easily—that is, leaving less for the painful efforts of the child's own after-time. It is a pathetic thing when later life chiefly consists in a process of recovery from a mismanaged youth.

And now I feel that, before passing to specific points of Parents' National Educational Union teaching and influence, I owe you a word of explanation for having dwelt so long on somewhat dry and abstract themes. After all, the philosophy that underlies any educational or social scheme is really the soul and vital part of that scheme, and I knew I could give but an amputated account of the Union's works before I had given some outline, however meagre, of the Union's faith. Works without faith are dead, whereas what I venture to call the noticeably common-sense methods of the Parents' Union rest on the science of Physiology and can show a reason for all that they do.

I have expressly stated that the Parents' Union urges no diminution from the office of the school-master, the professional teacher, the governess. This, as you see, is far from being the case, though, being primarily a *Parents' Union*, we do chiefly concern ourselves with methods of bringing up applicable to home life and from the earliest years. I consider that our Union's insistence upon early habit as education, and the stress it lays upon the faculty of *attention* as a basis for the entire superstructure of mental instruction, rightly pave a way towards unity of action between those sometimes



clashing functionaries, parents and school heads. Some of us must have noticed how flippant and even contemptuous a tone school-masters are apt to assume when talking about the boys' parents—as though they were poor, silly creatures, justifiable only when paying the term's fees. And, as a rule, perhaps, one is in sympathy with the school-masters! But captious indeed would be the man who should deny good sense, ay, and a mastery of life, to the parents who had so far prepared their boy for school as to have given him not one, but fifty, good habits, and taught him the precious art of attention. One of the endeavours of the Parents' Union is to arouse parents to a salutary sense that all the training, all the pruning of their children is not to be left to the frequently overtaxed school-masters or mistresses. Schools, even the best, have unavoidable deficiencies, and it is the function of "home" to supplement these deficiencies.

Miss Mason is of opinion that the constant society of his parents is too stimulating for a child. A young child needs frequent intervals totally devoid of excitement to brain or nerves—intervals for a free stretching of every limb of his nature, for self-directed play, for mere gazing into space in animal tranquillity, and perhaps in mental rumination. The Parents' Union believes that all children, boys as well as girls, should have a share of the very real happiness which comes from the exercise of the spiritualised strength we call skill of hand. It sees, moreover, how extremely desirable it is that children should be educated in the doing of common things well. Swimming and singing and knitting, cooking and cutting out and the knack of playing games—only the adult who is without these advantages perceives what

advantages they are. But here the Parents' Union would insert a warning note as follows. . . . In the temptation to arrange for the children's learning such desirable things as basket-work, clay-modelling, and Sloyd (which, through the medium of lectures, etc., we come to desire for our children), we must be careful that we look upon these as Child's Work and not as Child's Play. The Parents' Union urges us to respect the child's leisure and his growing time. What it really wants in connection with these matters is to see formed a public opinion strong enough gradually to obtain this manual training of which I have spoken from the schools—as features, that is, in the ordinary school course. Real work is not overwork, and should never become so, and the Union would emphatically impress on parents the duty of securing leisure for their children and respecting that leisure themselves in the home.

Thus far I have spoken little of the Union's views as to definite school instruction, but though its endeavours go more specifically to produce well-brought-up young people than book-learned young people, no one must imagine that it would not have ample provision made for the best and soundest intellectual instruction. According to our view, the object of lessons is in the main two-fold—to train a child in certain mental habits, such as attention, accuracy, promptness; and to nourish him with vital ideas which may bear fruit in his life.

Miss Mason devotes a most suggestive section of her book, *Home Education*, to discussing the responsibility of parents towards daughters just loosed from school employment and control. No one, I imagine, can over-



express the sense of blankness that rushes over many an upper-middle-class girl when school, with its stimulus and companionships, is left behind—a sense of blankness only too apt to degenerate into vacuity in a mind naturally indolent, into mischief of one sort or another in a mind naturally active. Perhaps no parental obligation needs sifting more than this one, and here is indeed one subject for profitable communing, parent with parent.

I have said that next to moral education through the formation of habit, Parents' National Educational Union methods aim at deepening the child's faculty of attention, for attention is the groundwork of all mental education. Who is the educated man? Is it not he who can direct the leverage of his mind wholly to the subject in hand? Without attention, sound judgment is out of the question, since data for judgment only yield themselves to attention. The Parents' Union realises this most strongly, and urges us to encourage and systematically cultivate in our children from early infancy the habit of attention. Most children are very liable to fall into a dilatory, desultory habit of mind—into a way of dawdling and mooning over whatever they have to do. By the nature of the case, this ogre of inertia is more successfully combated in schools than by the system of home lessons—but even at home the mother and the private governess may do much by resolution and decision. Daily and hourly we must endeavour to make the children personal possessors of the ancient family motto, "Do the next thing," personal possessors of it by right of personal conquest.

I come now to one of the main "practical" tenets of

the Parents' National Educational Union:—a child should be made thoroughly familiar with natural objects, with what is called 'Natural History.' From the first, children should be trained in observation of nature—not through printed books and vocables, but through their own eyes and their own fingers—direct, personal observation. And children take to this as ducks to the water when they are started quite early and by an interesting route. One of the secrets of education in nature-lore is to present nothing as stale knowledge, but to put ourselves in the children's position as regards each fresh miracle of nature that dawns upon them. I have often thought how ridiculous, if it were not so pathetic, it is, that men, who, in the words of Mr. George Meredith, "have drunk Latin like a vital air, and can quote what they remember of Homer," are incompetent to distinguish a moth from a butterfly, a blackthorn from a hawthorn, or the song of a thrush from that of a blackbird. These sealed senses the Parents' Union provides against in the rising generation, and I should strongly recommend parents and teachers to join the Union were it only for the advantages offered by its Natural History Club. Each Branch of the Union can have the papers and booklets of this central Club, and also a quarterly magazine containing various aids to Nature study, which is edited by the Committee of the Reading Branch Natural History Club. From our statistics, it appears that local Branches always do well when they arrange local Natural History Clubs, they are of such distinct and practical help to members. The Club of which I have spoken arranges the year's Natural History rambles and excursions on a systematic



plan of study and gives definite objects for them by holding, in addition to Branch exhibitions, a general annual exhibition of collections made by members and their children at the time of the Union's Annual Conference in London. Furthermore, it guides amateurs in giving Nature lessons, and recommends suitable text-books bearing on each section of Natural History that is being taken up. Nature Note Books, price one shilling each, similar to those used by the students at Miss Mason's House of Education, Ambleside, can be obtained from The Secretary, 26, Victoria Street, London, S.W., the Central Office of the Parents' Union.

What I have been saying of our Natural History Club would alone convince a stranger to us that the work and methods of the Parents' Union are not solely indirect. I have given a hasty and imperfect outline of the principles of education which the Union offers to the consideration of parents, and it is now time for me to describe its practical departments that directly bear upon the children themselves.

"The Parents' Union," writes an observer, "goes on without puff or fuss, by its own inherent force," and in its nine years of existence it has certainly made singularly rapid progress. At the present moment, considerably over ten thousand children of thinking, educated parents are being brought up on the lines of the Union. Parents who read *The Parents' Review* or other literature of the Society, parents who belong to our various Branches or our other agencies, parents who are influenced by these parents, are becoming multitudinous, and all have one note in common—the ardour of persons

working out inspiring ideas. Before speaking of our specific educational institutions, a word on the periodical "organ" of the Union. This, as I have just now incidentally said, is *The Parents' Review*, price sixpence monthly, its new volume commencing each January. Speaking from my own experience, I would specially recommend members of the Union, and sympathisers with it abroad, to take in *The Parents' Review* and read it attentively month by month. Its articles on educational topics are of great interest, many of them being written by eminent educationists, and often they are the lectures which have been delivered in various Branches, the titles of which, as heard of or announced beforehand, are apt to seem tantalisingly attractive to members of other and distant Branches.

Perhaps one of the most original of the Parents' Union sections is that known as the Parents' Review School. The Parents' Review School is described on the Union's general prospectus as "a plan devised for introducing some of the advantages of school training into home education." There are many cases of families living away from towns where a resident governess is a necessity, while there are other cases of parents not so situated, but where, for one reason or another, schools are held undesirable, at least for the girls, so a resident governess is the alternative. To many a resident governess the Parents' Review School must prove a godsend, for it provides against grooviness, lax ways, absence of good methods and good books, and the general mental stuffiness to which private education is so exposed. A time-table and syllabus of work is set for each term, and at the end of the term the pupils



receive examination papers. Governesses working in country homes and abroad in far-away foreign places find an immense stimulus in working with the Parents' Review School, and already it has pupils practically all over the world. Also by these means home-keeping youth gains what it is so much to its advantage to possess, an outside standard and test of progress, and a consciousness of solidarity, of being in a bond with many other unseen fellow-pupils, all working together in the same large school. On the leaflet setting forth the objects of the Parents' Review School, the first one named is as follows . . . "To secure a common standard of attainment, so that the home-taught child shall be equal to the rest when he goes to school," and, as a matter of personal experience, I know individual cases of boys who have passed on from the Parents' Review home school to ordinary schools the masters of which have cordially admitted that they had never before received pupils so thoroughly well grounded all round. So by its works we may know the Parents' Review School.

All the children working in the "School" are classified according to their powers. To this end, preliminary questions are sent to mothers framed to ascertain the physical and mental development, as well as the attainments, of each child. It is upon the answers to these preliminary questions that the children are classed. With the term's programme of work a time-table and "the Rules of the School" are sent, together with suggestions as to the method of teaching and the books to be used. Two features of the system which strike me as being unique and excellent are: first, the

absence of name or competition in the examinations—they just test the standard: secondly, the use of real books and not little text-books boiled down from larger ones—thus, for instance, in history, quite young children are taught direct from contemporary chronicles and from Plutarch's Lives. Speaking from a fairly long general experience of examination-setting, I have no hesitation in saying that the examination papers of the Parents' Review School really do what they profess to do, *i.e.*, they "test intelligent knowledge rather than verbal memory." But, as I have said, the chief benefit of the whole curriculum is that it secures to the home-taught child the gain of definite work upon a given syllabus, without the danger of "cram," and with some freedom in the choice of subjects. I may mention that several well-known schools have definitely adopted the Parents' Union principles of education and are conducting their teaching on the lines of the Parents' Review School papers.

The next feature of the Parents' Union to which I would draw your attention is the Mothers' Educational Course. Here we are again in the region of what I have called mediate education, though why an unthinking world should assume that with parenthood infallibility sets in, and a cessation of any need for education in the thickening problems of life, I cannot imagine.

The Mothers' Educational Course is a course of reading arranged for those who desire to study the subject of education, and is specially designed:

First.—To help mothers to give their children such



teaching as should confirm them in the Christian Religion.

Secondly.—To give the knowledge necessary for the care of children in sickness, and their development in health.

Thirdly.—To show the principles of Education, and methods based on those principles.

Fourthly.—To enable mothers to awaken their children's interest in Nature.

In the Mothers' Educational Course examinations on the reading done occur twice a year, while the final examination on Human Physiology and Hygiene is for the diploma of the National Health Society.

In view of a certain amount of vagueness that lingers in the minds of some, concerning the organisations of the two entirely separate institutions known respectively as the Parents' National Educational Union and the Mothers' Union, I should like to say a word or two—with a view to clearing away the uncertainty that seems here and there to exist. The Mothers' Union is a sectarian union, it became a Diocesan Organisation in 1887, all official workers in it must be members of the Anglican Church, and its local establishments are definitely parochial—in other words, the first step towards starting a Mothers' Union anywhere is to obtain the sanction of the incumbent of the parish. Hence, special services in church form a part of its arrangements. Our Parents' National Educational Union, on the other hand, is unsectarian. We believe ourselves to be profoundly religious in our aims and methods, and our foundress is an earnest member of the

Church of England; but we have no test or qualification of membership resting on sectarian exclusions, and our Union equally comprehends members of the Established Church and Jews, as well as members of the Society of Friends and of the other Nonconformist bodies. Secondly, the Mothers' Union is not educational, as our Union is, in the accepted sense of the term, "educational"; and I intend to cast no slur upon what is undoubtedly a very beneficent organisation when I say that the Parents' National Educational Union is a more specifically intellectual outgrowth of modern thought applied to the bringing up of children than is the Mothers' Union. There is no confusion between the two Unions in essence, and since, as I have partly shown, each starts from different premises and runs along separate lines, they cannot rightly be said to clash with each other in the smallest degree. Many of our members are also members of the Mothers' Union and find the ideas of our Union helpful in the other.

Let me next speak of the local habitation of Parents' Union educationalism at Ambleside, presided over by our founder and the guiding spirit both of our theory and practical efforts, Miss Mason. Lovers of "*Meister's Wanderjahr*" will feel a sympathetic association in the name of this place, *the House of Education*, a title which precisely and simply describes what it is. Here ladies are trained for the offices of teaching, whether professional, parental, or purely *con amore*. The interest felt in the House of Education is widespread, and it is not possible to supply the demand for governesses from it. Its Training Course for certificated teachers occupies two years, no student for the certificate being admitted



under eighteen years of age. There is a test entrance examination, for the work of the House of Education is not to impart general instruction, but training for the bringing up of children. The practice of education is learned and tested in a practising school, and among the subjects on which stress is laid are Hygiene, with Athletics, Nature Lore, the keeping of Nature Note Books, Arts and Crafts, and the teaching of Singing and the Piano by educative and intelligent methods. It may interest possible enquirers to know that students who have completed their training at the House of Education receive from £50 to £100 or £120 a year as resident governesses, according to their classified qualifications. In the limits of this address I cannot hope to say enough about Miss Mason's House of Education to prove how thorough are its aims. As regards the training of private governesses it is an institution that has not its parallel in England. The aim of education presented to the students there is to produce a human being at his best—physically, mentally, morally, and religiously, and I could enlarge, though I will refrain from doing so, upon the quickening influence upon girls' characters of living under Miss Mason's roof and absorbing direct her "Enthusiasm of (child-) Humanity." "One can read the difference in their faces," writes an observer from without, "and watch one who began as an ordinary, uninterested girl leave the House of Education an inspired, enthusiastic, purposeful woman."

And now a word upon the advantages offered to the members of each Parents' Union Local Branch, in return for their yearly subscription of half-a-sovereign or five shillings (the sum varies according to the individual

decision of Secretaries as to whether to include *The Parents' Review* or not in the subscription). First, the members are invited to attend a certain number of free lectures yearly, and secondly, they find therein the opportunity I have spoken of as the essence of the Union for consultation and consequent co-operation between parents and teachers. Furthermore, the members of the Branch are enabled to form and attend courses of lectures for themselves, and classes for their children, which are arranged by the Local Honorary Secretaries. Thus, in our Hyde Park and Bayswater Branch, Mrs. Franklin placed six of such opportunities before the members last session, *viz.*, for the children a brush-drawing class, a Sloyd and basket-work class, and a Swedish drill and gymnastic class; and for the adults, as well as children, hockey afternoons twice a week, with similar cricket arrangements commencing in May. For nurses, a yearly series has been arranged of "Talks," based on the teaching of Miss Mason's books, *Parents and Children* and *Home Education*. Reading circles are another feature which has proved specially satisfactory in newly started Branches. One of our more recently formed Branches, it may interest some to know, is Adelaide, Australia.

There is a large and excellent Educational Library at the central office, from which any Branch may borrow twenty volumes each session, which can be lent round among the members. Any individual member can similarly borrow books direct from the central office. A critical list and catalogue of this Free Lending Library (price 4d., post free) is obtainable on application. The Library contains several copies of Miss



Mason's own works, the study of which is, from my own point of view, indispensable to anyone who would estimate education as Miss Mason estimates it, as "an atmosphere, a discipline, a life." I should further add that our largely attended Annual Conference, occupying five days, takes place in London in May, where, at the *Conversazione* and on other occasions, eminent speakers address the company. The Earl and Countess of Aberdeen are the Presidents of the Union.

And now that the end of my tether is almost reached, what have I to say further? I would particularly call your attention to what first attracted my own towards the Union and has subsequently riveted my respect for it—I mean its absolute freedom from faddism. This moderation in all things I take to be its characteristic note. Our Union recognises the science of the proportion of things, it puts the first thing foremost, and does not lay too much upon the human shoulders of teaching and instruction, but leaves time and scope for the working of nature and of a higher Power than nature itself.

I have not dwelt, as I would willingly have done, upon what occupies a good deal of consideration in the Union's view of education—I mean education in courtesy, in rendering the amenities of life. But I have spoken of the scientific fact that habits actually mould or remould our human tissue, and those who went with me so far will see in that same fact a literal reinforcement of the famous Winchester sentence that *Manners Makyth Man*. Many people will agree with me that an improvement is needed in average youthful manners, let us say in the average schoolgirl's manners,

and it is no wonder that parents turn eagerly to those portions of Miss Mason's writing that deal with this subject. They are most penetrating and delicate-minded chapters.

Just as manners belong to the section of Education which the Parents' Union connotes with habit, so what I described as attention is linked with what I may call the crown of any man's education, his intellectual honesty.

"Truth ever, truth only the excellent," that is the goal of our Educational Union. Ability to find truth is the mark of a soundly educated person, and it was in this direction of training towards a sound judgment, and towards the ability to find truth, that women's education compared, until recently, so unfavourably with men's. I know no sadder spectacle than a woman untrained for intellectual honesty who is yet naturally clever, of vivid imagination, and eagerly sympathetic in philanthropy, politics, or social reform. There is not a cause she espouses but is the worse for her championship, and her life presents the piteous spectacle of a waste of natural endowment and energy. Let us by all means, therefore, begin the task early of cultivating in our children, especially in our clever children, this grand, balancing element of intellectual honesty. The Parents' Union is, indeed, pledged to it.

But if, after all, I have not emphasised that the educational aim of the Parents' Union is above everything else a moral and spiritual aim, the upbuilding of the character and soul of the child, my words have been but sound and vapour, signifying nothing. The lifting of a child out of slavery to mere wishes and appetites



into possession of a will serviceable whether to do or to suffer, in other words, the reconstituting of the will, the education of the conscience—this is the leading idea of the Parents' Union. Suggestion and habit are the methods of this "education," its head servant is attention, and it is at once chastened and fortified in its labours by the thought that nothing great or good was ever yet attained by sudden flight. Character is the result of conduct, and conduct is the result of *habit*—on that double axiom the Parents' Union bases all its schemes of Education.

**Lending Library.**—A large Library of Educational works is kept at the Office, and is free to members. It includes several copies of Miss MASON's *Home Education*, and *Parents and Children*, which members are strongly advised to read.

**Literature.**—The following books and pamphlets are for sale at the Office, 26, Victoria Street, S.W.

1. *The Parents' Review* (the monthly organ of the Union). Price 6/6 annually; single copies, post free 7½d. Specimen copies can be obtained free of charge on application to the Secretary.
2. *The Principles and Objects of the Parents' National Educational Union*. By Mrs. CLEMENT PARSONS. Price 6d., post free.
3. *A Talk to Nurses*. By HELEN WEBB, M.B. Price 2d., post free 2½d.
4. *The Home Training of Children*. By Mrs. FRANKLIN, Hon. Organising Sec. of the P.N.E.U., reprinted from the Board of Education's *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, Vol. 6. Price 3d., post free.
5. Catalogue of the Library. Price 5½d., post free.
6. *Thought Turning as a factor in the Training of Character*. By HELEN WEBB, M.B. Price 3d., post free.
7. *The Child at Home*. By Mrs. CLEMENT PARSONS. Price 6d., post free.
8. *Children at Home*, reprinted from the *Parents' Review*, by the Reading Branch of the P.N.E.U. Price 2d., post free 2½d.
9. *Home Education and Parents and Children*. By Miss C. MASON. Price 4/6 each, post free 4/10 and 4/11.



10. *Home Safeguards against Boyhood's Dangers.* By the Hon. and Rev. CANON E. LYTTTELTON. Price 2d., post free 2½d.

11. *Some Suggestions for the Curriculum of Girls and Boys under 14.* By Miss C. M. MASON. Price 3d., post free 4d.

12. *Nature Note Books*, in linen covers 1/-, interleaved foolscap 1/6, post free 1/4 and 1/10.

Specimen copies of the *Children's Quarterly* can also be obtained here. Copies on sale from Mrs. STANLEY HAYWARD, Hazlewood, Kendrick Road, Reading. Price 6d.